STATE OF THE CHURCHES
IN THIS ASSOCIATION,
1805.

[Miniſters Names are in Italics.]

Churches.	Meſſengers.	Increaſe. bp.	et.	res	Decreaſe. dſ.	ex.	dd.
Ashford,	*James White*, Joſeph Skinner, John Rogers, John Scott.	7			1		2
Sandhurst,	William Mills, Thomas Boorman, Robert Bridge.						2
Folkstone,	*William Atwood*, Thomas Welch, William Stace.					1	2
Bessel's Green,	*John Stanger*,						2
Chatham,	Nathaniel Tidd.	15	2	1			
Eynsford,	*John Rogers.*	5				2	
Rye,	*Thomas Purdy*, Thomas Dawes, John Cook, Sen. Henry Jarrett, Jun.						1
Rotherfield,	William Adams, John Diplock.						
Wivelsfield,	*John Sarjant*, John Knight, Richard Norman,	5					2
Lewes,	A Letter.				3	1	2
Brighton,	A Letter.	7			2	1	2
Handcross,	No Meſſenger nor Letter.						
St. Peter's,	*Thomas Cramp.*	4			1	3	
Seven Oaks,	A Letter.						
Shipley,	No Meſſengers nor Letter.						
		13	2	1	7	8	15

Increaſe 16.

STATE OF THE CHURCHES
IN THIS ASSOCIATION,
1805.

[Miniſters Names are in Italics.]

Churches.	Meſſengers.	Increaſe. bp.	et.	res	Decreaſe. dſ.	ex.	dd.
Ashford,	*James White*, Joſeph Skinner, John Rogers, John Scott.	7			1		2
Sandhurst,	William Mills, Thomas Boorman, Robert Bridge.						2
Folkstone,	*William Atwood*, Thomas Welch, William Stace.					1	2
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		13	2	1	7	8	15

Increaſe 16.

Beloved Brethren in the Lord,

THIS our annual Letter ſhould have been written by our late deceaſed Brother Copping, of Sandhurſt, who was appointed at the laſt Aſſociation, to draw it up for this year; but on account of his growing infirmities, declined it. The dear man of God, about two months before he departed hence, to be for ever with the Lord, aſked his Brother Purdy to do it for him; and rather, dear Brethren, than deprive you of half an hour's reading, Brother Purdy has complied with his dear friend's requeſt: and this Aſſociation has adopted this Letter as their own, and ſend it you for your attentive peruſal.

The ſubject, brethren, that I addreſs to your attention, is that of ſpecial, or ſaving faith in the Lord Jeſus; with the ſcriptural evidences of believing to the ſaving the ſoul. Heb. x. 9.

Dear Brethren, when as Miniſters, we conſider the ſolemn charge we have from God to watch over your ſouls, to be helpers of your joy, and to comfort you concerning your faith, 2 Cor. i. 24.---1 Thes. iii. 2. we hope the ſubject here brought forward to your view, by the bleſſing of God upon it, may have the happy tendency to comfort you concerning your faith, and afford you ſome joy in God.

You who have taſted that the Lord is gracious, who know and love the truth, and are enabled to believe in a precious Jeſus with a whole heart, are not unacquainted with the danger of having only an hiſtorical faith; that it is of no avail as to eternal life. And though we have reaſon to hope better things of all who truly believe in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; ſtill as they are expoſed to Satan's devices, the ſnares of the world, and the pollutions of nature, Chriſtians may get ſadly corrupted from the ſimplicity of the goſpel. Many of God's dear children have got extremely lax in their duty, and carnally minded, as to have but a ſleepy faith, and but little of the life of religion; ſo as to be almoſt deſtitute of good ſcriptural evidence of their faith being the faith of God's elect. This being admitted, a ſtatement of this important ſubject, may be a word in ſeaſon, to ſtir up your minds, to examine yourſelves by the word of God, whether your faith is that which is accompanied with ſalvation. This we wiſh you to bear always in your minds, that ſpecial faith in Chriſt is a working faith, famed in the ſcriptures in thoſe who had faith in a covenant God, for their obedience of faith to Chriſt; their cloſe walk with God, for a life of ſelf denial, and glorifying God in ſoul and body, 11th Chap of Heb. 1 Cor. vi. 20. But

before we fully take up the ſubject, we wiſh brethren, to ſet before you in a few obſervations, the great importance of believing in the Son of God,

I. That true and ſpecial faith in Chriſt is eſſential to ſalvation and happineſs. He that believeth not the goſpel, ſhall be damned. He that believeth not (ſaith Chriſt) that I am he, ſhall die in his ſins. And without faith, 'tis impoſſible to pleaſe God. Mark xvi. 15, 16.---John viii. 24.---Heb. xi. 6.

And it is equally true on the other hand, that he which believeth in the Lord Jeſus, ſhall be ſaved. Whoſoever believeth in the only begotten Son of God, ſhall not periſh, but have eternal life. Acts xvi. 31.---John iii. 16.

But II. There is an hiſtorical and dead faith in the doctrines of the goſpel. It therefore greatly behoves believers in Chriſt, to examine their faith by the word of God, whether it is the faith of his elect. We are told the devils alſo believe and tremble. Simon Magos believed, but remained in the gall of bitterneſs. The ſtony and thorny ground hearers in the parable, and the fooliſh virgins alſo were believers in Chriſt, but remained in an unſanctified ſtate; and are diſowned by Chriſt at the laſt day. Acts viii. 13, 23.---Matt. xiii. 20, 22.---Matt. xxv. 6, 11. There may be a believing in Chriſt to eſcape from hell, and an entertaining falſe hopes of happineſs; and the perſons ſo believing, mere formal profeſſors, who may have no concern for the glory of God; or for grace to reign in the heart, or about a meetneſs for heaven. It is an evident truth, that deſtruction and miſery are in the way of ſuperficial profeſſors, as much as in the way of the open prophane, and the ſelf-righteous. Matt. vii. 22, 23, 26, 27.

III. There is an erroneous faith, a perſuaſion that falſehood is truth; falſe doctrines believed in as the great truths of God. This is a deluſive faith, dangerous to men's ſouls, degrade the Lord Jeſus, beguile the conſcience, and nullify the truths of the goſpel. The evil communications of falſe doctrine, corrupt good manners. So ſaith the apoſtle, 1 Cor. xv. 33. Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners. This ſort of believers caſt out of their creed, all the diſtinguiſhing doctrines of divine grace. We are very far, dear brethren, from ſuppoſing that believers in Chriſt are all of an equal ſtature as to divine knowledge; or that they exactly ſee eye to eye. Infants of grace go to glory, as well as fathers in Chriſt. But we think that the ſpirit of God by regeneration, diſpoſeth the hearts of men to receive the truth as it is in Jeſus. And by looking over the epiſtles of the apoſtles to the ſaints of God, in the ſeveral

churches, and other parts of the word of truth, it plainly appears, that the great truths of the goſpel were believed in by the called of God. This is evident, from the words of truth put into their mouths by the Holy Ghoſt. As when they are taught to ſay, as expreſſing their faith in their gracious God, and in the doctrines of ſovereign grace; Who hath ſaved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpoſe and grace, which was given us in Chriſt Jeſus, before the world began. 2 Tim. i. 9. And again, knowing brethren, your election of God, 1 Thes. i. 4. Theſe grand truths of the goſpel, were the meat and drink of true believers in Chriſt, ſubjects of much joy, praiſe, and thankſgiving to God. Jer. xv. 16.---Rev. v. 9, 10.---Rev. vii. 9, 10. Our Lord's words will apply to the ſubject we are upon. Take heed therefore how you hear. Take heed what you hear. Luke viii. 18. Mark iv. 24. So we ſay to you brethren, take heed as to the kind of faith with which you believe in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. And take heed as to what you believe, that it is the real truth of God. This is a ſure maxim, that a falſe faith cannot be the production of the ſpirit of truth; nor a perſuaſion ariſing from a falſe creed, be productive of godly ſimplicity, or of holy fruit to God.

IV. Whatſoever may be ſaid, of its being the duty of natural men, to believe in any divine revelation God may be pleaſed to make to them, or of its being their duty, on hearing of the goſpel of Chriſt, to believe the glorious report of a free ſalvation for ſinners by Jeſus Chriſt. We do not conceive that ſaving, or ſpecial faith in Chriſt, is demanded of them, as a duty enjoined by the moral law. We admit it was the duty of the Jews to have believed Chriſt to have been the true Meſſiah and Son of God: they had the moſt convincing evidence to ſatisfy them of the truth and glory of his character. And from the like evidence as revealed to men in the ſcriptures; there being read to them, or as explained, or the goſpel preached to them in its purity; natural men are bound to credit their Almighty Creator.

But as the moral law knows nothing of faith in Chriſt for ſalvation; nor does the law propoſe to ungodly men the believing in Chriſt for eternal life; we therefore cannot ſuppoſe that ſpecial faith in Chriſt, is enforced by the law as a duty on natural men. It is certain it is not ſo in many words; nor is it ſo by implication: this would be a legalizing the goſpel; (that commands nothing, but gives all things) turning the goſpel into law, or blending them together, as to the matter of ſaving faith. This is like grafting goſpel faith on the ſtock of the law; as if

God commanded ſinners to ſeek ſalvation by Chriſt, by doing the work of the law. This looks like ſalvation by works and grace, denied by Paul, Rom. xi. 6. But brethren, let us all rejoice, that believing to the ſaving of the ſoul, is a new covenant bleſſing, provided for the elect of God, in their eternal election. 2 Thes. ii. 13. In this, all our dear brethren the Calviniſts, agree and rejoice with us.

But to come to the ſubject, as firſt ſtated; eſpecial faith, or a believing in Chriſt to ſalvation.

I. We aſſert with the apoſtle, that divine faith is the gift of God. The faith of the operation of the ſpirit of God. Wrought in the veſſels of mercy, by the exceeding greatneſs of the power of God, to usward who believe according to the working of his mighty power. Eph. ii. 8.---Col. ii. 12.---Eph. i. 19. 'Tis therefore a miracle of grace, that any poor ſinner in the world, is brought cordially by faith, to fall into the Saviour's arms, or to have his heart opened to let in, and embrace the Chriſt of God, to reign in his ſoul, as his prophet, prieſt, and king. This is followed with a heart-felt perſuaſion, as to the precioufneſs of Chriſt, ſo as the believing ſinner caſts himſelf upon him.

The means made uſe of by the Lord, to bring on a believing in him with the whole heart, is the word of the truth of the goſpel. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God preached. Rom. x. 17. Men are ſaid to be begotten of God by the word of truth. And begotten again to a lively hope, by the reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead. Jam. i. 18.---1 Pet. i. 3. The quickening power of the holy ſpirit of God, breathing life into the ſoul, by the word of truth, is the effectual cauſe of this change; as it is alſo of our receiving the goſpel into our underſtandings and affections. There muſt be ſpiritual life, and a being renewed by grace, before men can truly believe in Chriſt for ſalvation. The goſpel is clothed with power, to quicken ſouls dead in ſin; and God, who commanded light to ſhine out of darkneſs, ſhines by his word into the hearts of men, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jeſus Chriſt. 2 Cor. iv. 6. This brings on a firm perſuaſion and believing views of the perſon and precioufneſs of Chriſt. Hence ſpecial faith may be ſaid to be a hearty perſuaſion of the truth and grace of Chriſt; a perſuaſion that draws out the heart to him, as the only Saviour; ſtirs up a ſolicitous concern, to be partakers of Chriſt and his great ſalvation. And faith, or believing to the ſaving of the ſoul, is attended with having the heart purified by faith. The believing convert flees from ſinful ways; goes out of himſelf to Chriſt, to be ſaved by him; his heart is

ſoon filled with love, and his tongue with praiſe. Acts xv. 9. Heb. vi. 18.---1 Pet. i. 8.

II. True and genuine faith in Chriſt, is called a coming to him, a cloſing in with him, with full perſuaſion of heart, as the only way of ſalvation from ſin and hell. John vi. 37. The true believer, in believing, goes to Chriſt, as the only way to the Father, and to an endleſs life. John xiv. 6. As a guilty ſinner, the man of faith goes to Chriſt for the pardon of ſin through his blood. As a periſhing creature goes to Chriſt, to be ſaved from ſin and deſtruction. As an unclean creature, he haſteth to Chriſt to be cleanſed from his ſins in the fountain of his blood. As naked, he looks to Chriſt to be clothed in his ſpotleſs righteouſneſs. Yes, and the true believer alſo goes to his Redeemer, as the fountain of life. and to his fulneſs to ſupply his need. A ſoul coming to Chriſt by faith, with a hearty perſuaſion of the truth of theſe things, a thouſand ſcoffs cannot ſtop his applying to him, as to a ſuitable and all-ſufficient Saviour. Heb. vii. 25. And in general, it will be in the uſe of the means of grace; and the ſoul thus allured to come to Chriſt by faith, is moſt aſſuredly won by the Lord. And by faith he ſteps into the way of ſalvation, enters by Chriſt the ſtraight gate, and walks on in the narrow way to an endleſs life. Theſe outgoings of the ſoul by faith after Chriſt, proclaim the mind to be under a ſupernatural power, and the drawings of heavenly love; and is a believing to the ſaving of the ſoul, and ſo of living by faith on the Son of God. Heb. x. 39.---Rom. i. 17.

III. Special faith in Chriſt is deſcribed as receiving him, as ſaid in John i. 12. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. A receiving Chriſt Jeſus the Lord. Gladly receiving his word. Col. ii. 6.---Acts ii. 41. is a believing with a genuine faith. Faith is the ſoul's receiving act, by which Chriſt is received into the inmoſt affections. The Chriſt of God, and the word of the truth of the goſpel, is moſt ſweetly and cordially embraced by the believing ſoul. Chriſt, the object of faith, is precious in the believer's eſteem, and goſpel truth very dear to him; and the Saviour's love, his atoning blood, his juſtifying righteouſneſs, are the things his receiving faith lives upon. The ſtronger his faith, the greater is his love to God; the larger his joy and heart-felt peace. And the more lively we are in believing, the greater will be our attachment to God; the more ſhall we want to enjoy his preſence, and be concerned in his glory, and to triumph in him. 1 Pet. i. 8.

IV. Special faith in Chriſt, by a metaphorical ſpeech, is conſidered as the eye of the ſoul. Believers are called upon to be

looking unto Jeſus; as alſo, to look unto him and be ſaved. Heb. xii. 2.---Iſ. xlv. 22. By faith, as by the eye of the ſoul, believers in Chriſt behold the glory of the Lord, and diſcern ſpiritual ſubjects. By faith, Abraham rejoiced to ſee Chriſt's day, and he ſaw it and was glad. And by faith, Moſes endured ſeeing him who is inviſible. John viii. 56.—Heb xi. 26. 'Tis by the eye of ſpecial faith, Jeſus the King is ſeen in his beauty, and viewed as altogether lovely. And believers, as with open face, beholding as in a glaſs, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the ſame image, from glory to glory, even as by the ſpirit of the Lord. 2 Cor. iii. 18. Hence by this ſeeing eye of faith, are helped to delight in the Lord; to admire his great love to ſinners; do long after him; and in a way of believing, are aſſimulated into his likeneſs. Chriſt declares himſelf raviſhed by this one eye of their faith. Cant. iv. 9. Here we ſee Chriſt and the true believer in company together, and in ſweet communion; Chriſt dwelling in the believer's heart by faith; and the believing ſinner dwelling in Chriſt by faith alſo.

V. Faith in the Lord Jeſus, is compared to an hand, by which truly enlightened ſouls take hold of him, by a firm perſuaſion of mind, as their great Redeemer.

By ſpecial faith, as by an hand, believers lay hold of eternal life: yes, and lay hold of the hope ſet before them. Like to a man who ſtretcheth forth his hand to get hold of any thing to break his fall, prevent drowning, or to graſp, and hold faſt what is valuable; ſo the believing ſinner by faith takes hold of Chriſt, his ſtrength, blood, and righteouſneſs, as the ground of his hope, and foundation of his ſafety; truſteth him, and ſtayeth his ſoul upon him, in life and death. And when the hand of faith is ſtrong as Jacob's, in wreſtling with the God man, the believer will not let him go, 'till he hath got the bleſſing.

VI. A hearty believing in the Lord, is accounted as eating and drinking. As it is by a ſpecial faith, the ſaint eateth Chriſt's fleſh, and drinketh his blood. (that is in a ſpiritual and myſtical ſenſe) It is a good criterion of a living faith, and of living by faith on the Son of God; that believers feed much on Chriſt the living bread, ſent down from heaven. As alſo, that his words are found, and eat by them. And that the beloved of their ſouls goeth down ſweetly. John vi. 35, 52, 54.—Jer. xv. 16.—Cant. vii. 9. This kind of faith ſtrengthens and gladdens the heart, awakens up much prayer and praiſe. And our Lord aſſureth us, there is no life or ſalvation for us, without this feeding faith. John vi. 53.

We will now brethren, ſet before you a few ſcriptural evidences of divine faith, or a believing to the ſaving of the ſoul.

I. Truly enlightened ſouls have ſcriptural evidence, that their's is the precious faith of God's elect; by their ſhewing a hearty concern to have ſatisfaction that the efficient cauſe of their believing in Chriſt, is that of the goſpel coming unto them in power, and in the Holy Ghoſt, and in much aſſurance. 1 Theſ. i. 5. And that in receiving the word of God from miniſters, they receive it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh alſo in ſuch as believe. 1 Theſ. ii. 13. A godly ſoul cannot reſt ſatisfied with a mere notional faith, let his notions be ever ſo ſound. But in believing, he wants to feel the word coming to his heart, with a ſin-killing power; to taſte its divine ſweetneſs; to feel its charming influence to engage, and unite his heart to God. A truly ſerious believer in Chriſt, will be forward to aſk his ſoul ſuch queſtions, as theſe that follow: Have I received the truth in the love of it? Hath God purified my heart by faith? Is mine a godly working faith? Is it ſuch a faith as brings my heart to be right with God, and true to my profeſſion? Yes, my concern is to have that faith, by which a man lives on Chriſt, and that leads the ſoul to live to him, love him, and glorify him for ſo great a ſalvation. There muſt be fruit beloved, or our faith is dead and vain.

II. It greatly concerns believers in the Lord Jeſus, to ſearch for good evidences, as to their being poſſeſſed of the faith of God's elect. And the following things do evidence that our faith is genuine; namely, that our faith in Chriſt leads us to feel a holy diſguſt, in viewing the exceeding ſinfulneſs of ſin, as a thing hateful to God, and as dreadfully offenſive to the good and holy majeſty of heaven. Alſo our coming to Chriſt for ſalvation, as men ſtripped of all ſelf-ſufficiency. A going to God, as guilty miſerable creatures, for the pardon of our ſins, for Chriſt's ſake. As alſo, a hearty confeſſion of our ſins to God; mingled with godly ſorrow. A forſaking of ſin, out of hatred to it. And when we, as penitent prodigals, return to God with a broken heart. Luke xviii. 13.---Eph. iv. 32.---1 John i. 9.---Luke xv. 19, 22. Such an hatred of ſin, and melting affections, ariſing from faith's views of a ſin-pardoning God; cannot proceed from legal terror, or from a lifeleſs faith, but from the power of God. And when the word of ſalvation

ceived with an over-flowing gratitude, it appears to be the
's own work upon the ſoul, and a proof of genuine faith.

III. It is an evidence to a believing ſinner, that his faith is the precious faith of God's elect, when he believes and looks for ſalvation in God's own way; in a way conſiſtent with his

glory, and his being glorified by our ſalvation. As for inſtance, when a man's faith is ſteadily fixed on God, as he was in Chriſt, reconciling the world to himſelf, not imputing their treſpaſſes unto them. 2 Cor. v. 19. When alſo the believer ſeeks for ſalvation in the way in which juſtice is ſatisfied; the law magnified and made honorable by the obedience of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; and its curſes removed from his people, by Chriſt being made a curſe for them. Iſ. xlii. 21.---Gal. iii. 13, Thoſe who ſet off for heaven with ſuch ſolid views of goſpel truth, are in the way of feeding ſweetly on the Lord Jeſus; to caſt and reſt themſelves upon him, and to become his affectionate friends and admirers. And we think we are juſtified in ſaying, that it is no good evidence of a man's faith being wrought of God, to expect ſalvation in a way contrary to his truth and holineſs.

The true believer cannot, he doth not wiſh for ſalvation from the Son of God, without holineſs; or for juſtification, without ſanctification; or for the pardon of his ſins, without Chriſt's being formed in his heart; or for happineſs, without holineſs. If we look over the many prayers of faith, put up by the children of God, recorded in the ſcriptures; we ſhall find the breathings of their ſouls, not only to be ſaved from the bottomleſs pit; but that God would give them a clean heart; form his image in them; make them holy, and enable them to walk with him, and run the way of his commandments. Pſ. vii. 6. 10.---Pſ. cxix. 32. True faith, doth not in any ſenſe, make void the law. In believing in Chriſt, we give it, in him, all its demand, as a covenant of works; and by faith are actuated to perpetuate the law as a rule of practice: forasmuch as faith engage men to delight in the law, after the inner man, and with the mind, ſerve the law of God. Rom. iii. 31.---Rom. vii. 22, 25.

IV. A full ſcripture evidence of genuine faith in a precious Saviour, is a new principle wrought in our ſouls; whereby old things are paſſed away, behold, all things are become new. 2 Cor. v. 17. Our ſouls are formed into the likeneſs of God; being his workmanſhip; created in Chriſt Jeſus, unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we ſhould walk in them. Eph. ii. 10. By this rule, chriſtians ſhew their faith by their works. Abraham's faith wrought with his works, and by works, faith was made perfect; that is, manifeſted to be a right and genuine faith. James ii. 22. 'Tis by godly practice the apoſtle teacheth us to prove the ſincerity of our faith in the Lord of life and glory. Thus he reaſoneth, what doth it profit, my brethren, though a man ſay he hath faith, and have not works? yea, a man may ſay, thou haſt faith, and I have

works: ſhew me thy faith without thy works, and I will ſhew thee my faith by my works. James ii. 14, 18. And it is a truth, that Chriſtians exerciſing faith in the covenant promiſes of God, have Chriſt living in them, and they living by faith on the Son of God. Gal. ii. 20. Faith connected with this union, and mutual indwellings of Chriſt in the ſoul, and of the believing ſoul in Chriſt, brings on in the believer a holy converſation, and an imitation of Chriſt. Matt. xi. 29, 30. A bleſſed evidence of real faith.

V. Genuine faith drawn forth into exerciſe by the power of the Holy Ghoſt, is evidenced by experience. 'Tis common to ſuch as have true faith, to be drawn by the cords of divine love; to have the love of God ſhed abroad in the heart; they derive from the glad tidings of the goſpel, light, life, and ſtrength. At times the ſoul ſweetly exclaims as believing in adopting, electing, redeeming love; theſe are my choice things; on theſe ſublime truths I have ſweet feeding; here I am bound up in the bundle of life; and this is my way from earth to heaven. The true believer, at times, is much delighted with the proſpect of glory which the goſpel opens to his ſeeing eye of faith, ſo as to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And when the believer in a precious Saviour, is carried above fear, ſenſe being joined with his faith; he is filled with joy and peace in believing, and his heart flows out with love to God. 1 Pet. i. 8. The holy believing ſoul has joys, which ſtrangers to God intermeddle not with. Thus experience evidences the truth of our faith: as the experience of God's dwelling in us; his feeding our ſouls by his word; his ſupporting and ſtrengthening his people; and above all, a firm belief of his being their God. The apoſtle affirms, Rom. v. part 4, 5. Experience worketh hope; and hope maketh not aſhamed, becauſe the love of God is ſhed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghoſt, which is given unto us.

VI. A death to ſin is a good evidence of genuine faith. In the fourth and fifth chapters of Paul's epiſtle to the Romans, the apoſtle largely treats on the ſubject of the juſtifying righteouſneſs of Chriſt; as alſo on the fear, love, and ſuper-abounding grace of God to ſinners; and interlines in his diſcourſe, a pleaſing account of the faith, hope, joy, and peace of God's believing people. In chapter the ſixth, the apoſtle treats of the fruit and evidences of faith: ſuch as the believer's being dead to ſin, and alive to God. Sanctification here followeth ſpecial faith, as a ſound proof of it, in the believer's fruit unto holineſs, and the end everlaſting life. Rom. vi. 1, 2, 11, 22. And a like ſubſtantial evidence of faith, is ſeen in the believer's overcoming the

world, and the old ſerpent the devil, as 1 John 4, 5.—Rev. xii. 11. and by faith's ſhining brighter under ſevere trials. 1 Pet. i. 7.

VII. It is a clear evidence of our having the faith of God's elect, when we, as believers in Chriſt, do love and regard the moral law, as the rule of our converſation. Paul, who was very clear in the doctrines of grace, who cannot be ſuſpected as a legaliſt, or merit-monger, or to be ignorant of goſpel liberty, preſſeth this line of conduct in all his epiſtles, upon the ſaints of God. And as a believer in Chriſt, expreſſeth his delight in the law of God, after the inner man; and aſſerts, that with his mind he ſerved the law of God. Rom. vii. 22, 29. which if deſtroyed, or ſet aſide by God, muſt have been an act of will-worſhip. The faith of that perſon appears very doubtful, who, with the full bent of his heart, violently denies the moral law, as the rule of a believer's converſation. It looks very much like a ſtrange faith, a looſe or dead one, ni the high flying believer to caſhier the moral law of God, and by ſo doing, ſtrike at the moral government of Chriſt in his church; and at the law, as in the hands of the merciful Prince Immanuel.

But the Holy Ghoſt aſſureth us, that as believers in Chriſt, we are not without law to God, but under the law to Chriſt. 1 Cor. ix. 21. The law of God is ſaid to be in the heart of the gracious man. Pſ. xxxvii. part 21. And the godly man hath his delight in the law of God. Pſ. i. 2. And in the new covenant, God declares he will put his law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts. Jer. xxxi. 33. which as it is a tranſcript of the nature and will of God, was formerly inſcribed on innocent man's heart. And is again written on men's hearts by regeneration. Eph. iv. 24. to bring on a regard and reverence to its holy maxims, as the perpetual rule of their converſation. True, it may alſo have reſpect to the doctrines of the goſpel, but not to the excluſion of the holy, juſt, and good law of God. Perſons who diſclaim having any thing to do with the moral law of God, as their rule of converſation, appear to verge nearer than they apprehended, to thoſe whoſe carnal mind is enmity againſt God; for it is not ſubject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Rom. viii. 7. Such perſons who deny the moral law of God, as the rule of a believer's converſation; often uſe rude and harſh language againſt the ſaints and people of God; calling them bond-ſlaves, children of the bond-woman; though called into the glorious liberty of the ſons of God. But what is much worſe, ſuch men ſpeak of the law, (a copy of God's

moral perfections, and as containing expreſſions of his holy will) in degrading terms. As that believers being ſtirred up to regard its holy precepts, is leading them into bondage. That theſe holy commandments of God, are only fit to be a rule to bond ſlaves. That it is inſufferable to put the children of God to ſuch drudgery, as walking by the rule of God's holy precepts. What! is it become a drudgery to believers, to walk according to God's moſt holy will; to love their neighbours; to be juſt in their dealings; to attend to do the good the law commandeth? ſurely not; does not the real chriſtian find himſelf moſt happy when his heart is beſt diſpoſed, from believing views of Chriſt, thankfully to obey God's holy will. Pſ. cxi. 10. But theſe gentlemen aſſert, believers have nothing to do with the law. A ſad and fatal miſtake. We muſt ſay, that believers have to do with the law, as a rule to walk by. The goſpel ſerves the law, allures to the practice of it, when felt in its divine power. Faith obeys God's holy will, as well as believeth in Chriſt for ſalvation. We wiſh to pity and pray for theſe men; that God would give them better judgments, and purge out of their hearts this taint of libertiniſm. But their cenſures we deteſt. We think not well of their pretended ſuperior knowledge; we are very fearful 'tis ſuperior pride, and a dreadful deception. We rejoice, brethren, that Chriſt is the end of the law for righteouſneſs, to every one that believeth. Rom. x. 4. That he hath freed his people from the law as a covenant of works. And the Lord Chriſt hath redeemed his people from the curſe of the law, by being made a curſe for them. Rom. vii. 1. 4.---Gal. iii. 13. A moſt pleaſing ſubject. But he that hath cancelled the law as to the matter of it, and obliterated all its holy precepts, as no more to be regarded by his believing people, as a rule to walk by, we hold in everlaſting abhorrence. What! the holy Redeemer make his believing people lawleſs? 'tis high treaſon againſt the king of glory to aſſert it. And they are treaſonable thoughts in the heart, that foſter up the opinion. That the goſpel is the remedy, to bring on our holy obedience to God, is granted. That a principle of grace in the heart, is the root and ſpring of godly obedience, is likewiſe granted. But it muſt be admitted alſo, that when God by the goſpel, and by the influence of his grace, conſtraining men to obey him, a certain rule of obedience is pointed out to them to walk by. If aſked, what is this certain rule of Chriſt's, by which his children are to walk? our anſwer is, the law and teſtimony, or the holy ſcriptures, are the whole and only rule of faith and practice, to the

dear children of God. Is. viii. 20.---Mat. xxviii. 19, 20,---2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. As to the rule of the believer's walk, there are but very few positive institutions or commandments of God, under the new testament dispensation: the rest are moral duties, though to be performed from evangelical principles. The code of moral precepts, contained in the moral law of God, are then doubtless a fixed unchangeable rule of conversation, to christians in all ages. For if no fixed rule for our conversation, enthusiasm and will-worship will be the consequence. And such as deny the law as a rule of walk, go near to make their own rude fancy their rule. And what is worse, write themselves sinless in the present life; for if no law, there is no transgression. And in taking away the law, as a rule of walk, is to stifle all conviction for sin, and lull the conscience asleep. However, obedience to God's holy precepts, is such an evidence of the sincerity of our faith, that if a contrary conduct abounds as a looseness of walk, and a disregard to God's holy law, our faith is dead and vain. James ii. 17, 26.

To conclude. We admit believers may get very carnal. Many doubts and fears may arise in the mind. This calls for much praying to God to increase our faith. And true believers may expect returns of mercy from God; so as to have their graces invigorated. Such returns of mercy is as it were, God's setting his seal to our first faith; that it was a believing to everlasting life.

May the God of grace be with you all. Amen.

FINIS.

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